



## Back-to-School Bulletin #1

*CER's Back-to-School Bulletins are designed to provide you the real news behind the headlines, giving you the information you need to improve education for America's school children, and your own.*

### TESTING RESULTS SHOW LITTLE PROGRESS

**(Washington, DC 8/28/01)** As America heads back to school this week, it's time to give parents and policymakers a **reality check** to help guide their thinking and actions for the next school year.

- The College Board – administrator of the SATs – announced the 2001 scores for college-bound high school seniors today. After accentuating the positive – that more minorities are taking the test than ever before and that test scores do rise when children take more challenging courses – there are still some unfortunate negatives that are daunting by comparison:
  - There has been a long-term decline in SAT scores. Since 1967, SAT Verbal scores have dropped a precipitous 37 points, and Math scores have remained flat.
  - In a clear sign of grade inflation, forty-one percent of college-bound seniors reported grades of “A-,” “A,” or “A+” – up from 28 percent ten years ago. Yet, the scores of those students have consistently declined in those years in both verbal and math scores, with the worst decline (11 points) coming among the “A+” and “A” students.
  - Despite larger numbers of minorities taking the SAT test, their levels of achievement remain low, with a minority achievement gap of as much as 105 points.
  - The other national test frequently used as part of the college admissions process is the ACT. ACT scores have remained flat over the last several years. Since 1997, average English scores have remained at 21.5, Math scores have dropped by one-tenth of one percent to 21.7, and Reading scores have dropped by three-tenths of one percent to 22.2.
- The 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also underscores problems in core competencies. NAEP math test results showed modest gains in fourth and eighth grades, but meanwhile, the racial achievement gap remains unchanged. Scores for 12<sup>th</sup> graders are down across all categories, and barely a quarter of fourth and eighth grade students are performing at or above proficient categories.
- The results from December's Third International Mathematics and Science Study – Repeat, U.S. show that students in math and science fell well below students from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and 10 other countries. In fact, U.S. fourth grade students taking the test four years earlier had higher international rankings than 2000's eighth grade students. In other words, the longer they stayed in American schools, the worse they did in international comparisons.

The bottom line – despite more college-bound seniors and “better” SATs, little progress has been made and children remain unprepared for future challenges and opportunities.

**Next week** – When Numbers Don't tell the Whole Story.

###

*The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization providing support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at <http://edreform.com>.*